DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 919 HE 029 555

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TITLE Using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria To Improve Quality in Higher Education.
PUB DATE May 96
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the Forum of the Association of Institutional Research (Albuquerque, NM, May 1996).
AVAILABLE FROM Office of Institutional Research, San Juan College, 4601 College Blvd., Farmington, NM 87402 (free).
PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; *Awards; Business Education; Change Strategies; College Faculty; Educational Planning; Evaluation Criteria; Feedback; Formative Evaluation; *Higher Education; Human Resources; Labor Force Development; *Leadership Responsibility; Long Range Planning; Models; Professional Recognition; *Quality Control; School Administration; *Self Evaluation (Groups); Staff Development; Standards; Student Needs; *Total Quality Management
IDENTIFIERS *Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award; New Mexico; *San Juan College NM

ABSTRACT

This report discusses the Malcolm Baldrige (MB) Education Criteria, the award process, and the experiences of one institution, San Juan College (New Mexico), that received an award at the state level. The Baldrige Criteria are based on 11 core values: (1) learning-centered education; (2) leadership; (3) continuous improvement and organizational learning; (4) faculty and staff participation and development; (5) partnership development; (6) design quality and prevention; (7) management by fact; (8) long-range view of the future; (9) public responsibility and citizenship; (10) fast response; and (11) results orientation. An institution under consideration for an award under the Baldrige Criteria must submit to the awarding agency a self-assessment report written around the seven MB Criteria providing the framework for the core values, including leadership; information and analysis; strategic and operational planning; human resource development and management; education and business process management; school performance results; and student focus and satisfaction. In 1994 and 1995, San Juan College participated in the Quality New Mexico Award process. This process uses teams of evaluators who read, score, and write feedback comments on reports of organizations under consideration for an award. This document concludes that the Baldrige Criteria have provided a conceptual framework that focused the action planning process of San Juan College. (CK)

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Using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria to Improve Quality in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The Malcolm Baldrige criteria present a framework of values that can be addressed in any organization that is seeking to improve quality and service regardless of the quality method used. These criteria provide a means for higher education institutions to do a self-assessment and receive feedback on their progress in developing quality processes. This presentation discusses the Malcolm Baldrige education criteria, the award process, and the experiences of one institution that received an award at the state level.

Paper presented at

May 96 Forum of Association of Institutional Research

Albuquerque, NM.

HE 029 555

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Using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria to Improve Quality in Higher Education

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Some higher education institutions have recently adopted Total Quality Management (TQM) as a method for promoting quality and improvement. However, TQM is still viewed with suspicion by those who are skeptical of the applicability of a business method to higher education processes. Spin-offs such as Total Quality Service (TQS) and Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) attempt to translate the concepts of TQM into language that is less offensive to educators. Still, despite the increase in the number of conference sessions, the influx of self-proclaimed gurus, and the flood of literature, the quality movement leaves many in higher education doubtful, perplexed, or unconvinced. For those who are inspired by the message of continuous improvement, the resounding question is "How do we start?" Missing the point that TQM is first and foremost a management philosophy, businesses and educational institutions alike jump on the quality bandwagon by grasping onto concrete actions like quality circles and statistical tools. There is no more deadly approach to a quality initiative than beginning with massive efforts to train staff in statistical process tools. TQM has been undermined by those who define it solely by statistical tools. This misdirection is beginning to be reflected in articles that discuss the failures of "TQM" to deliver on its promises.

A less publicized quality initiative is quietly spreading across the nation. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) developed a set of criteria that reflect the basic value system underlying quality, known as the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria. These criteria are general enough to be applicable to any type of organization, whether large or small, public or private, profit or non-profit, manufacturing or service. The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria place the focus of attention squarely where it belongs, on values, processes, and results. The criteria are not prescriptive about how an institution should approach quality, allowing methods to vary depending on the mission and culture of each institution. Therefore, the criteria are compatible with TQM and derivative methods as well as other management styles.

The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria have been adopted by many state governors for state level awards. The award process requires the submission of an application that is a self-assessment of the organization based on the criteria. The application is reviewed by a panel of trained evaluators.

for use in its improvement efforts. The feedback report represents many hours of free consulting from the evaluation team and provides the organization a status report as well as a compass for future improvement.

Self-assessment and peer review are familiar concepts to all accredited educational institutions. Having recently undergone both a ten-year reaccreditation process and a Malcolm Baldrige Award process, I can say that the Malcolm Baldrige Award process is much more rigorous and much more to the point. The accreditation process is based on meeting minimal standards and has nothing to do with quality. The recent attention from the federal government resulting in SPREs (State Postsecondary Review Entity) is an indication that this fact has been "found out" and we have been judged to be too lax in setting standards for ourselves. The purpose of self-assessment using the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria is to continuously strive toward the highest standards. In the national award process, organizations that receive awards typically score around 600 out of 1,000 points indicating that even the best have plenty of room for improvement.

The balance of this paper will describe the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria, the application and evaluation process, and the feedback report. In addition, I will describe the effect that the application process had on a specific college.

Malcolm Baldrige Criteria

In 1995, the National Institute of Standards and Technology adapted the business quality criteria to fit education and health services. The Malcolm Baldrige (MB) Education Pilot Criteria use language that is familiar to educators and avoids the offensive language of "customer", "product", and "supplier" without diluting the values in the criteria. The Education Criteria are therefore more accessible to educators and still hold educational institutions to the same standards as business. In these times of poor credibility in the eyes of the public, the consistency of standards across sectors is an important factor.

The MB Education Criteria are based on a set of core values. These core values are (1) learning-centered education, (2) leadership, (3) continuous improvement and organizational learning, (4) faculty and staff participation and development, (5) partnership development, (6) design quality and prevention, (7) management by fact, (8) long-range view of the future, (9) public responsibility and citizenship, (10) fast response, and (11) results orientation. Each of these core values is built into the MB Criteria and is reflected in the evaluation of the self-assessment report.

The self-assessment report is written around the seven MB Criteria which provide the framework for the core values. The MB Criteria are:

1.0 Leadership

2.0 Information and Analysis

3.0 Strategic and Operational Planning

4.0 Human Resource Development and Management

5.0 Education and Business Process Management

6.0 School Performance Results

7.0 Student Focus and Student and Stakeholder Satisfaction

In the self-assessment report, the seven Criteria are the chapters. Within each criterion or chapter, the institution must address items (28 in all) that focus on major requirements within the criterion. Items are also broken down into Areas to Address. Each of these levels need to be interpreted in terms that relate to the specific mission of the institution. The requirements and critical success factors are free to vary from institution to institution. In this way the Criteria establish values and guide the discussion without being prescriptive in requiring how institutions address each issue.

In the self-assessment report, an institution must describe its approach to each of the categories, items, and areas to address. By describing how the institution approaches each category, the discussion is focused on processes and systems. A typical shortcoming in self-assessment reports is to describe what is done. Educational institutions are typically engaged in a large number of activities and can readily describe what they do. The change in thinking that is required to describe systems and processes brings forth a critical realization; the many activities that we do are seldom connected in a systematic way and just as infrequently evaluated as processes. The change from asking what to asking how is a small indication of the tremendous transformational power that the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria can leverage in an institution.

In fact, the beginning of a systematic approach is the first stage in the quality journey, according to the Malcolm Baldrige scoring guidelines. Most educational institutions that have begun a quality initiative are still at this basic level of developing systems and transitioning from a reactionary approach to problem solving to a general improvement orientation. Participation in a Malcolm Baldrige self-assessment can be a key to further institutional improvement.

As an example, let us look at criterion 5.0 Educational and Business Process Management. The table below shows the criterion at each level: category, item, and areas to address.

Category	5.0 The ***Educational and Business Process Management*** category examines the key aspects of process management, including learning-focused education design, education delivery, school services, and business operations. The category examines how key processes are designed, effectively managed, and improved to achieve higher performance.
Item	5.1 **Educational Design** Describe how new and/or modified educational programs and offerings are designed and introduced.
Areas to Address	5.1a. How educational programs and offerings are designed. Describe how the school ensures that: (1) all programs and offerings address student needs and meet high standards; (2) sequencing and offering linkages are appropriately considered; (3) a measurement plan is in place; and (4) faculty are properly prepared. 5.1b. How design takes into account educational program and offering delivery. Describe how the school ensures that all educational programs and offerings; (1) focus on active learning, anticipating and preparing for individual differences in student learning rates and styles; (2) make effective use of formative and summative assessment; (3) have adequate faculty-student contact; and (4) include appropriate formative and summative feedback mechanisms. 5.1c. How the school evaluates and improves its design of educational programs and offerings. Describe: (1) the factors and information used in the evaluation; and (2) the frequency and content of evaluations and who conducts the evaluation.

The Evaluation Process in New Mexico

In 1994 and 1995, I participated in the Quality New Mexico Award process as an evaluator. The QNM process uses a tiered approach which allows organizations at all levels the opportunity to be recognized for their efforts. The beginning level is recognized by the Pinon Award for organizations that have made an initial commitment and have "planted the seed" for a quality initiative. The intermediate level is recognized by the Roadrunner Award for organizations that are "on the road" making progress toward implementing systematic quality processes. The highest level is recognized by the Zia Award, which is the "crown jewel." To date, there have not been any Zia award winners in New Mexico.

QNM uses teams of evaluators with three to nine people on a team. The team members individually read, score, and write feedback comments on the reports assigned to them. As a group, the team discusses the report, their feedback comments, and their scoring. A consensus process is used to arrive at the final scoring and feedback comments. The teams present their scores and feedback reports to a panel of judges who have the final word on the outcome. The final Feedback Reports are returned to the organizations as the product of the QNM assessment process.

The Feedback Report provides the organization with strengths and areas for improvement for each item within the MB Criteria. This level of detail provides the organization information on where it currently stands in the quality journey and what steps are needed to move forward. The Feedback Report is based entirely on how the organization measures up against the MB Criteria and is not prescriptive about what the organization should or should not do.

Participant in the Quality New Mexico Award Process

In 1994, San Juan College participated in the QNM award process. After many years wondering if we should implement TQM and if so, how to get started, the QNM process offered a way to write about what we were already doing without having to worry about implementing something foreign. While there were many barriers to implementing TQM, the Malcolm Baldrige Criteria did not have any entry requirements. There are no tools, no teams, no processes, no prerequisites to getting started in Malcolm Baldrige. It is not necessary to re-engineer, get total leadership buy-in, or disrupt the organization in any way to be "in." With the MB Criteria, you simply write about what (how) you are doing regarding each of the categories.

At San Juan College, we found that we were doing fairly well in many areas. In some areas, we did not have much to write about, and other areas we did not understand at all. The holes became quite obvious. However, the College was awarded a Roadrunner Award, indicating that the College had established systematic processes in many areas. The effect of winning the award was electric. In one move, the College became enmeshed in the quality process. The MB Criteria provided a framework and a language to guide the College. Several issues that had been ignored for years, such as professional development for faculty and staff, came to the forefront as critical issues. The new 5-Year Plan was designed around the seven MB Criteria with goals and objectives relating specifically to the Categories, Items, and Areas to Address. The Feedback Report stimulated action items in the annual planning process, and the President is talking about applying for the Zia Award soon.

The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria have provided a conceptual framework and a set of core values that have unified and focused the action planning process of the College. The QNM award process provides us a way to measure and gain recognition for our progress in terms that are understandable and appreciated in all sectors including business, government, and education. The QNM award changed the College from flirting at the door of TQM to deeply committed to the quality journey without major upheaval, resistance, or reorganization. The Malcolm Baldrige Criteria were the catalyst of a quiet revolution that will continue to grow and impact the College in profound ways.

Sources of Information:

National Institute of Standards and Technology
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